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The Fourth Anniversary of the Opening of the Spring Garden Road Home of the First Baptist Church, Halifax, N. S.,

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 12, 1891.

Have we a Mission? Are the Baptists needed to-day?

ADDRESS BY THE PASTOR, HENRY F. ADAMS.

A church of Jesus Christ, is a visible society of believers, united for the purpose of promoting their own growth in grace and personal holiness, maintaining the ordinances of the gospel, and extending the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the earth. The body of christians who meet in this audience room to-day, assume to be such, according to the teaching of the New Testament. Doubtless most of you are familiar with the origin, growth and formation of the First Baptist Church, as narrated by Dr. E. M. Saunders. That was a happy day for Halifax, when Lord Dathousie's Chaplain proclaimed the glorious gospel of the blessed God here. He was at least to one "a bright and shining light," for through his preaching Jesus "the power of God, and the wisdom of God," Mr. J. T. Twining, (Curate of St. Paul's) was brought into the liberty of the gospel. As a natural consequence of his conversion, Mr. Twining preached the same gospel, and through his preaching, the gospel proved to be the power of God unto salvation, unto many that believed. Being probably jealous of the growing popularity of his converted Curate, the Rector, Mr. Inglis, dismissed Mr. Twining from his service. None can wonder that most of the regular attendants at St. Paul's so far sympathised with Mr. Twining, as to follow him. After a brief consultation, he and they decided to engage a building where they could worship God according to their conscience, and have the gospel preached in its purity. The temporary structure being over-flowed with eager listeners, the seceders commenced to erect for themselves a permanent home. This object was reached in the erection of the Granville street chapel, at a cost of \$11,250. Most of the seceders returning to St. Paul's, before the building was finished. It was purchased by those who had become convinced that Baptism by immersion was the only scriptural mode, and believers the proper subjects. Of the large number who originally came out from St. Paul's, only about twenty stayed out, part of whom were the constituent members of this Baptist Church.

The Lord's Day of September 30th 1827, was a great day, for it was the birthday of the Granville Street Baptist Church. In the morning Professor Chase, of Newton Theological Seminary, baptised six believers in the Bedford Basin, which was a most solemn and impressive scene. In the afternoon, the building erected by the seceders, and finished by the baptised portion, was opened for the first time for public worship. This first public meeting was the recognition service of the new Baptist Church, consisting of 16 persons. Prof. Chase, representing the American Baptists, extended the hand of fellowship to Dr. Lewis Johnson, who represented all the members of the Church.

From that day onward, the new and small church had evident tokens of the divine approval, that the right step had been taken in the formation of a church after the pattern of the New Testament, and one week after the recognition service, the church met to ordain a Pastor and Deacons. From the first day, the Lord sealed the truth proclaimed, souls were saved and added to the church, christian character was built up, and the development of the energies of the members secured. A Sabbath School for instruction in the word of God, attended by old and young, was vigorously carried on. This young church gave birth to the most effective form of Home Mission work which has since grown into its present strong and inter-provincial character. Foreign Missions also have ever had a large place in the church's benevolence, which has been also practically illustrated in the consecration to the work of Miss DeWolf and Miss Wright, members of this church. To the talent and influence of this church, the denomination is indebted for the founding and management of the "*Christian Messenger*" which for many years held a prominent place in the christian journalism of the provinces. We could occupy a large space in sketching the birth and growth of our beloved and honored Acadia College, to which has been devoted much of the thought, time and money of the members of this church.

Last but not least, we would mention the formation of the North and Dartmouth churches, of which this church is the mother; she also aided in founding the "Baptist Book Room."

For nearly sixty years the church worshipped in the old stone building on Granville Street, where amidst storm and sunshine, sometimes within and sometimes without, she accomplished a good work for God and humanity, the fruits of which we enjoy to-day. Many have been the changes through which the church has passed, yet, she has not swerved in her fidelity to the doctrines of grace, nor departed from the New Testament church polity espoused by its founders.

The extension of the city south and west, made it necessary in the judgment of the church to occupy a more central position in order to reach a wider constituency, and thus increase its usefulness. The first step towards this end was taken in 1870, when the ground was purchased on which this building stands. Then after a few years the vestry was erected, and finally this spacious and handsome house of worship was begun in 1886, and completed in 1887.

The total expenditure amounts to \$43,031.90. Cost of the Land \$5,385.00. Cost of the Vestry \$8,000.00. Cost

of the Audience Room \$6,096.90. Cost of the Organ \$2,300. Cost of Pulpit and other Furnishings \$1,250.00. Grand total \$43,031.90. Paid \$30,931.90. Leaving a debt to day of \$12,100.00.

When this House occupied in April, 1887, there was a mortgage on the whole of \$15,000.00. On the first day of October of the three following years, 1880, 1889, 1890, \$1,000.00 were paid, and it ought to be the very lowest aim of this congregation to do the same every year till the whole mortgage is cleared off.

In order to accomplish this very desirable end, it is necessary that we raise \$250 every quarter, and this cannot be done unless we contribute systematically, a given sum according to our ability. Are we equal to the task? Is this congregation financially able to carry out this proposition? I do not think that there is any doubt as to our ability, and I cannot question our willingness. Acquaintance with a very little of your history, convinces me that when a need has been demonstrated as right, reasonable, and attainable, you have ever been willing to undertake its accomplishment. It is certainly scriptural for a church or a christian to "owe no man anything," it therefore must be a right thing to pay off this debt. As a matter of commerce it is not the best policy to pay \$600.00 a year interest, if that sum could be devoted to benevolent purposes. And it is certainly reasonable that we should undertake to do that which we are able to accomplish. Therefore I ask you to study the following propositions.

I am not fully acquainted with the financial ability of all who compose this congregation, but I believe I am safe in saying that the following division of contributors is within a possibility:

CONTRIBUTORS.	QUARTERLY AMOUNT.	QUARTERLY AGGREGATE.
5	\$20.00	\$100.00
5	10.00	50.00
10	5.00	50.00
10	2.50	25.00
15	1.00	15.00
20	50	10.00
		<hr/> \$250.00

I think that some such easy and systematic plan for reducing our debt, is called for to-day, in the place of an occasional spasmodic effort, in the form of a Bazaar, Concert, &c. I ask the ladies of this congregation, "would you not prefer to give one dollar, or 50 cents a quarter regularly, than make an occasional huge effort in the form of a sale or Bazaar?" Of course this plan is simply positive, and is submitted as the better one in my humble judgment. If you have one that is better and more in harmony with the wishes of the majority of the members, you have the same liberty to propose it as I have this one. I am only one of your number and desire to assume no more right to say how you shall reduce the debt, than the poorest and the weakest in the church. If the church decides to have a Sale or Bazaar, or to adopt any other method for raising money I have no power to prevent the execution of one or all of them.

But this I would like to say, as the result of experience and observation. I firmly believe that the Church of God is coming to see, that the only way by which she can raise money for religious and benevolent works, and preserve her spiritual power, is by free-will offerings. She has proved by bitter experience, that money raised through methods, by which she has sacrificed her exalted character as "Christ's Bride", has been a very small gain at an almost infinite loss. Questionable ways of getting money have often involved years of spiritual weakness, and have made her a "reproach and a byword" in the mouths of Christ's enemies. Therefore whatever plan you adopt for the attainment of this desirable end, I trust that it will be one, that will not be inconsistent with the spirit of Christ's teachings, that it will be one that will not burden a few willing hearts, and ease the many, and that it will be easy, equitable, and right.

Has this Church a mission? Is there an absolute necessity for its existence? Planted on this site, is there a bible reason why we should live? If these questions can be answered in the affirmative, then the questions we must put to ourselves are, Are we willing and prepared to carry out our mission, to demonstrate the need for our existence and to bring forth the bible reason why we should live?

What is the great principle that forms the basis of our separate denominational structure? We believe that the fathers and founders of this "First Baptist Church" had a clearly defined reason for which they willingly sacrificed much that was dear and pleasurable, when they seceded from St. Paul's Church. Now what was that principle that led them to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints? I might answer it by asking another question, viz.: "What is that one element that runs all through the Saviour's and the Apostles' teaching, without attention to which the New Testament is fully followed or understood, and which we claim is the distinctive principle of the "Regular Baptist Denomination" of this continent?

Is it Baptism by immersion? By no means, for there are hundreds of thousands and scores of millions who have been baptized by immersion, who are not in our denomination nor do they adopt our distinctive principle. There are 600,000 of "Campbelites" on this Continent, and 65,000,000 of Russians who have as truly been baptized by immersion as I have, and yet their Baptism no more involves the Baptist principle than does the "christening" that I received in "All Soul's" Episcopal Church, London, England, in my infancy. I know that many people who are ignorant of the fundamental principle on which intelligent Baptists base their argument for a separate denominational existence, suppose that it is simply the quantity of water that divides us from other bodies.

Baptism by immersion, is involved in the Baptist principle, but the Baptist principle is not involved in Baptism by immersion. A man may be baptized by immersion, and yet not be qualified for admission into a regular Baptist church: therefore baptism, with all its divine teaching, was not the prime principle for which the 16 constituent members of this church banded together on Sept. 30th, 1827, to contend for and to extend. Neither is that the

principle for which the baptist brotherhood contends to-day. And yet both many pedo-baptists and ignorant Baptists think that baptism by immersion is the *alpha and omega* of the causes of our separation from all other churches.

It is not a tenacious attachment to any one part of scripture—whether it teach the necessity of the new birth, justification by faith, the inspiration of the bible, believers' baptism, or any other one doctrine—that we contend for. But the great principle that underlies them all, and no one more than another. And it is this principle that, to every intelligent Baptist, forms the ground of every doctrine he holds to, whether or not other denominations accept all his reasons for his faith and practice. The Baptists' great guiding principle, was, is, and ever must be nothing more nor less, nothing broader nor narrower than "Obedience to Christ in all things."

Not obedience to any one doctrine or precept, but obedience to all the teachings and commandments of the Lord in their spiritual significance and their literal order. Others have paid a profound and reverent regard to certain parts of the Word of God, scrupulously fulfilling the letter, because of an hereditary belief, or in support of a theory they cherish in the heart. But to take the whole of the New Testament, as the Holy Spirit has recorded it, and render obedience to its commands, both with regard to the individual believer and the organized church, this is the principle that has ever been the watchword of, and is still the mission of the Baptists.

Obedience in being baptized by immersion, and disobedience with regard to the doctrine of "Justification by Faith" would at once invalidate our claim to "Obedience to Christ" as the distinctive principle of our mission, and we would rightly be reduced to a mere ritualistic body as "Immersionists." But because some other denominations obey in the doctrine of being justified by faith, and disobey in the doctrine of believers' Baptism, we are made to appear as if baptism by immersion were the principle that divides us from other denominations. Whereas our mission is to obey and get others to obey, not only these two great truths, but all the related truths that compose the sublime system of revealed religion.

When will our Brethren in other denominations cease to charge us with being specially bigoted with regard to the Lord's supper? We have no desire to be different from them in conserving this ordinance to immersed believers, but the restricting of the table to regenerate and immersed believers, is the natural and legitimate consequence of our having adopted "obedience to Christ" as our distinctive principle. If we adopted another principle, such as Episcopacy, or Methodism, Presbyterianism or Congregationalism, not one of which involves obedience to Christ in all things, and then contend for the spread of any one of those forms of church government, a close table at the Lord's Supper would not and could not be a natural sequence. And why? Because obedience to Christ in all things would not be the point at issue between us and other bodies: but we and they would simply be having a race for numerical supremacy. But because we have made it our distinctive mission to obey, and get others to obey, the precise order of our Lord's commands as he has given them to man, therefore we have to differ from those who do not make this the fundamental principle of their denominational existence: and because of our obligation to carry out this principle regarding the Lord's Supper, we are sometimes called bigots.

We are called "Baptists", simply because we obey in being baptized the way our Lord was baptized. Our being called Baptists implies that those who are not immersed are not and cannot be called Baptists. But we are not so much "Baptists" as we are "Obedientists." For if all men were immersed, and yet were to disobey the command to repent and believe, before being immersed, then we would be called by another name, and that name would represent the doctrine in which we obeyed and others passed by as non-essential. We would then probably be called by the name of "Regeneratists"; because we would refuse professors of other denominations the privilege of coming to the Lord's Table, because they were not converted, though they had been baptized the same way as we, by immersion. In that case you can plainly see that Baptism would not be a point at issue, between us and other bodies, for everybody would be a Baptist, and the name "Baptists" drop out of existence. But we might still be called bigots, because we refused to invite others to the Lord's Table who had not obeyed the command to repent and believe the gospel.

Even if a "regenerate church membership" were the point at issue between others and us, that particular tenet would not be the Baptists' distinctive principle: but it would still be nothing broader nor narrower, nothing more nor less than "obedience," though of course others would narrow the difference between us to the one thing, viz., "regeneration" as they do to-day to "baptism." The enormous "Greek Church" of Russia, and the Baptist denomination of this continent, offer an illustration of the point I am trying to logically prove. I have given you argument, now just look at the illustration. The Greek church and the Baptist body both baptize by immersion. If I were discussing the cause of separation between these two bodies with a priest of the Russian Church, would we spend a single minute on the subject of baptizing by immersion? Decidedly not. Why not? because just here we would both be Baptists. When I baptize I put the body under water, and when He baptizes, He also puts the whole body under water. But when He baptizes, the subject is an infant, therefore our argumentation would not be on the *mode* of baptism but on the *subject*. My task would be to show him from the Word of God, that he is disobeying the order of the biblical ritual, which always and everywhere demands that faith in Christ as the Saviour of the soul, shall precede baptism; whereas He baptizes his subject before this qualification can take place. So that if we were in Russia to-day, we would not be contending for the faith once delivered to the saints as to the scriptural *mode* or baptism, but as to the proper *subjects* for baptism. In this country we have to both.

All authority centres in Christ, and in Him and us we allow no Pope, Bishop, Synod, Presbytery, Conference, or any other human authority to exercise any power over us, either as individual christians, or as organized churches. His words come to us with no uncertain sound, but have behind them all a "Thus saith the Lord," when he commands, it is subject neither to our approval nor revision, but it comes as the unalterable, irrevocable, and imperative word of the Majesty of Heaven. He does not ask our obedience as a cold duty, and as such he never

accepts it, but he asks us to render obedience to all his commands from the same motive that prompted Him to obey His Father's will. He says "if ye love Me, keep My commandments." Since "love is the fulfilling of the law," there can be no limitation of our obedience, while love is deep, and fervent and strong but our love to Christ cannot be deep, and fervent, and strong, if we deliberately prefer the authority that is merely human, before his authority in His Word. There is no such thing as loving Christ, and disregarding His commands: for a love that fixes itself on the person of Christ, by that same act avows eternal loyalty to His revealed commands. Therefore because our Supreme Lord commands us to obey, we chose "obedience to Christ" as the one and only governing principle, that we call the Baptist principle. Not because we like or dislike what He commands; not because it ministers to our comfort or distinguishes us from others, but because the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only wise God has commanded us to obey. Therefore taking His commands in their spiritual significance and their natural order, and rendering them the obedience prompted by love, we stand by this old doctrine for which our forefathers in the faith contended so earnestly, and for the conservation and advancement of which this old church meets here to-day.

If a man declines obedience to the plain commands of Christ, he enters on a course of disobedience, that may lead him, as it has done many others, to the antipodes of Divine truth, and from the milder forms of error, many have gravitated towards Unitarianism, Universalism, Rationalism, Deism, Pantheism, until lost in the vast realm of unbelieving indifference. If you choose another principle that does not involve unconditional obedience to the simple word of God, you must have a formulated creed, in which to embody your belief and defend your practice. In the Baptist denomination, without a cast iron creed, strapped on the members and ministers, almost invariably they are characterized by loyalty to, and abiding enjoyment of the great truths of the gospel. We are the only great body of christians that can maintain union among ourselves, fidelity to the Word of God, and succeed in the advancement of our mission without a written creed. We are the only denomination in all Christendom that can afford to stay inside the covers of the Bible for authority for all we believe and practise, because of our holding as the one central principle "obedience to Christ."

If any shall say 'The First Baptist Church of this City having secured a beautiful Home, that therefore she ought to settle down to a quiet, easy, and comfortable life, ending her days in peace,' let me here and now remind you, that immediately this Church does that, she at once abrogates her claim to the principle of obedience to Christ, as her distinctive one. For this principle involves not only personal obedience but also its perpetuation through others. If by others neglecting the command to be baptized as was our Lord we are made to feel that we are set for the defence of that particular command, let us remember that the end of our obligation is not reached, when we obey in baptism. The same Lord who commands us to obey in baptism, also commands us to teach others to obey in baptism: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned." Is this an obsolete command? Then so is Baptism. If we obey in being baptized, and then cease to teach others to obey too, we at once surrender the Baptist principle, for we cease to be obedient to Christ. But let us not suppose that our mission begins and ends in getting people baptized, possibly it may begin lower down, and end higher up. For there are some things that are greater as well as some things that are lesser than baptism. If you are brought into contact with a soul that is unsaved, evidently your work in that case is not to extend the doctrine of believers' baptism, but the "Baptist principle," which is "obedience to Christ." With such a person you will urge the command to repent and believe the gospel, and that if He do not obey, he will perish eternally.

In that way you will extend the "Baptist principle," for you will be teaching Him to do "the greatest thing in the world" namely, to obey Christ. If you meet a man who has been converted and baptized according to the order of the New Testament, but who is neglecting family worship and his church relations, then you will not talk to him about Baptism, but about those things in which he is remiss, for in those things he has ceased to be obedient to Christ, and it is your duty to help to restore him to obedience to known commands. If you refuse to reclaim that baptized brother from his fallen state, you refuse to extend the "Baptist principle" for in that work you refuse to obey Christ.

Brethren and Sisters—If I have succeeded in proving our right to live; I have shown that this church has a distinct mission in harmony with the New Testament; If you are truly convinced that the work the founders of this church accomplished, is needed to-day, then let us consecrate ourselves anew to this great and holy task! About a century ago the Baptists on the whole of this continent numbered 50,000, to-day the membership of the regular Baptist Churches is three millions and a quarter, with some ten millions of adherents. Behold! what God hath wrought by the free and full distribution of his own pure Word! and there are yet greater triumphs in store for that powerful gospel. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations (i. e. reasonings) and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; our strength is gotten by prayer; and our object is the glory of God. Brethren and Sisters, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, know the truth, so as to be filled with the word of Christ in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and whoever forsakes the ranks, or whoever wavers in that battle, do you

Dare to do right—dare to be true,
You have a work that no other can do,
Do it so bravely—so kindly—so well,
As to gladden all heaven, and silence all hell.

Dare to do right—dare to be true,
Other men's failures can never save you;
Stand by your conscience, your God, and your faith,
Stand like a hero—and battle till death.

Dare to do right—dare to be true,
Keep the great judgment seat always in view;
Look at your life, as you'll look at it then,
Scanned by Jehovah, and angels, and men.

Dare to do right—dare to be true,
Cannot Omnipotence carry you through?
City, and mansion, and throne all in sight,
Then DARE to be TRUE—yes, DARE to do RIGHT.